

Development of the technical infrastructure should not be limited to the use of a single technology. This infrastructure should be flexible enough to adapt to and use multiple available technologies and new technologies that arise for information delivery.

The role of the state Public Utilities Commission and regulatory constraints on infrastructure development were discussed both under this question and when participants were asked about barriers. Participants want to see preferential rates for libraries and educational institutions using these new technologies. Infrastructure that begins and remains affordable to all North Carolina libraries at some level of participation is desired. One comment suggested a minimum of Internet access first, then upgrading libraries toward full two-way video, NCIH access.

Although it is somewhat a content issue, archiving of information resources was also an infrastructure issue, both where information is stored and how vast amounts of information can be kept available to users.

The problem of structuring access in a variety of ways included the concept of tiered access, delivering local information first, then regional, then state information. Another problem of structured access was how to mix commercial and public information resource access in the network. These comments point out the problem of interface and structural consistency within the network and the large question of who can make and enforce these determinations.

What knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be required of users of the network?

Ideally, discussion group participants wanted to see a consistent, extremely easy-to-use interface, one that would not require a librarian as an intermediary or trainer. One suggestion was that online training be a part of the system and that training would occur as part of the experience of using the system. Realistically, it was noted that the goal of a single interface was not possible if people used many different software packages with which to access the network.

Librarians need education and assistance to become familiar enough with Internet resources to assist patrons and to keep themselves informed. One very basic level of education needed by librarians was assistance with a glossary of the terminology of networked information resources. It was suggested that selection, identification, and evaluation of Internet and in-state information resources should take place at a higher level than locally. Librarians, it was reasoned, would not have the time or sophistication of Internet browsing experience to make these choices. Participants likened this problem to that of selecting reference materials. They would prefer to be presented with a list of pre-tested materials of known value and utility. Librarians, on the other hand, could take on the responsibility for making these choices and getting involved in packaging the information presented to their users.